

APPENDIX.

COAL.

Mr. J. DENT to His Honor O. CURTIS, Esq.

Brunner Coal Mine, 26th May, 1872.

SIR,—

The miners are getting into debt at the Brunner Coal Mine, for want of employment occasioned by the continually flooded state of the river, and have stated that they will have to seek employment elsewhere in order to procure a livelihood, unless more constant work is afforded them. The alteration in the river caused by the great flood has made such a difference in the falls, that it is seldom in a workable state for full loads, and even when it is so, the coal boatmen will not exert themselves to supply the demand for coal. In the first place, they are not allowed to stack any coal on the wharves; secondly, they are short of boats, and will not build any more (although several have been lost); and thirdly, they can often find other employment equally remunerative, there being a great demand for boatmen to convey goods up the country. This is causing the shipping to leave Greymouth without coal, and to procure it at other ports.

I therefore propose to lay down a cheap wooden tramway from the mine to Cobden; to erect four shoots at Cobden, quite apart from the wharf, to hold about 200 tons of coal, and thereby to keep the demand for coal fully supplied; also, save all the trade that is now lost, and keep the mine constantly at work. Attached hereto will be found an estimate of cost, which, for the whole, will be about £3,500, and I am perfectly convinced that the Government would be at no loss, should they expend the amount, at the end of the first year after its completion.

Knowing Mr. Dobson is fully employed, I can do the whole work myself, with Mr. Dartnall's assistance to make the survey and take the necessary levels. Moreover, the miners would bear a reduction of 1s. per ton from present prices for cutting coal, besides a small amount per ton for trucking. The whole of the goods required at the mine, for which 40s. per ton freight is now paid, would come free. The whole of the difference between selling price of coal at the mine, 10s., and price at Cobden, say 18s. (but really now 20s.), would be secured to the mine; and further, a good bridle road would be provided for travellers to the mine, accessible in all states of the river. 12,000 tons of coal per annum are now sold. It is therefore reasonable to suppose that at least 16,000 tons would be the immediate result of the alteration.

The amount of carriage to Cobden thus secured would be 16,000 tons of coal (at 8s., £6,400), to which the working expenses would bear a very small proportion.

The whole work could be completed in about four months: the benefit would therefore stand thus:—

	£	s.	d.
Freight on 16,000 tons coal, at 8s.	6,400	0	0
Deduction of 1s. per ton from miners	800	0	0
	£7,200	0	0
Less working expenses per annum	£750	0	0
Improvements, wear and tear	£750	0	0
	£1,500	0	0
Leaving a balance to good of	£5,700	0	0

This amount would clearly leave a good margin to repay the outlay with interest.

ESTIMATE of TRAMWAY six miles long. 6×3 rails.

	£	s.	d.
95,040 feet, 10s.	475	4	0
Sleepers, 3 feet apart, 10,560, 50s. per hundred	264	0	0
Freight and expenses, delivering timber, at 2s. 6d. per hundred	118	16	0
Laying 480 chains of tramway, 20s.	480	0	0
Expenses, bridging creeks, &c.	200	0	0
Erecting four shoots at Cobden	750	0	0
Felling bush, cutting and clearing over 480 chains, averaged 10s. Amount estimated "laying tramway"	240	0	0
Cutting round Cobden Hill at base, 30 chains, at £10	300	0	0
Purchase of four horses, £40	160	0	0
Harness, &c., for same	30	0	0
Stables, &c., for same	50	0	0
Sundry expenses, surveying, &c.	132	0	0
Erecting 20 trucks, and gear for same, £15	360	0	0
	£3,500	0	0

The above calculations can be depended upon, as a firm here, owning a steam mill, has offered to lay the whole tramway for £5 per chain (480 chains, £2,400), which includes everything but shoots, horses, &c. The quantity of coal sold for the month is only 484 tons. Only one load has been sold this last seven days, and the mens' earnings for the last month will not average £6 per man.

I shall feel obliged with an early reply, as the men are really anxious to know what to do, having many opportunities to obtain employment on the roads and other public works which are now being carried on in the district.

His Honor the Superintendent, Nelson.

I have, &c.,
JAMES DENT.